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US STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE IMPACT OF THE NATO SHORT WAR STRATEGY,

by

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FOREWORD

This memorandum was presented at the Military Policy Symposium sponsored by the Strategic Studies Institute and held at the US Army War College in early 1977. Under the general theme "Inter-American Security and the United States," a broad range of issues affecting US relations in the Latin American region were addressed. This paper considers the movement of Latin American nations away from the traditional US-Latin American political alignment and toward identification with third world positions, and the implications of this trend for US security interests. The author suggests that the strategic importance of each Latin American area is conditioned by the strategic NATO decision whether to prepare for a war in Europe of long or short duration, since Western Europe will remain vital to US security for the foreseeable future.

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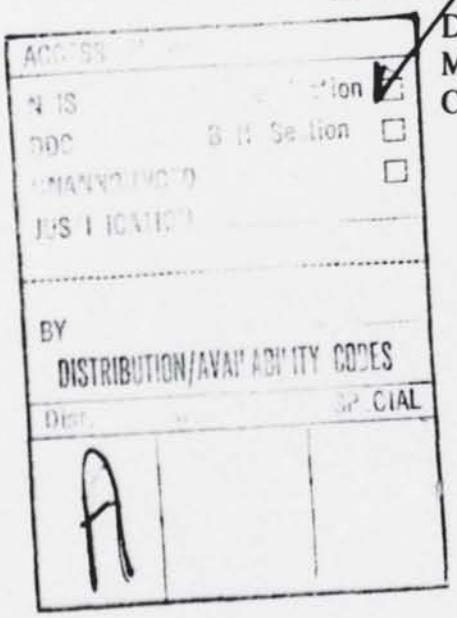
This memorandum is being published as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. The data and opinions presented are those of the author and in no way imply the endorsement of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.

DeWITT C. SMITH, JR.
Major General, USA
Commandant



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

CAPTAIN RAYMOND A. KOMOROWSKI, US Navy (Retired) has been Head, Surface Warfare Information Periodicals and Projects for the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Surface Warfare) since August 1976. Prior to this duty he served for four years as Chief, NATO Policy Branch, Plans and Policy on the Joint Staff and as the Navy member of the Special State-Defense Study Group (OSD). Captain Komorowski was commissioned from Northwestern University and earned a master's degree in international relations from George Washington University. He has had four commands at sea culminating with the guided missile cruiser USS Boston, and has sailed in all the major seas and oceans of the world.

US STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE IMPACT OF THE NATO SHORT WAR STRATEGY

Although the nature of US relations with Latin America has changed from time to time during the long span of hemispheric history, only recently has the region as a whole distinctly begun to move away from major international policy positions proximate to those of the United States. Indeed, the previous attitudes held by Latin American officials of Pan-American harmony and community are, in some cases, giving way to those of discord and strife. In many nations the view is widespread that Latin American interests are closer to, and can be better served by, association with the developing third world states both in and outside the hemisphere than by a continuation of close ties with the United States. As yet, these perceptions are mainly restricted to economic issues and have not significantly impacted upon the area of common security interests. Given the obsessive interest of Latin American nations with economic development, however, it would not be surprising if differences over economic issues came to dominate the climate between Latin America and the United States, particularly when and where our common security interests are not well and clearly defined. Moreover, the articulation in public of US support for human

rights will make relationships with some Latin American states more prickly than before. Finally, the uncertain processes of political and societal maturation are far from complete in most Latin American nations. In fact, the milieu invites continuing turbulence in which opportunists of the extreme political left and right will aggressively seek dominance within their countries and scapegoats and support from outside. Given the new trend in US-Latin American relations, and the generally uninviting internal prospects for most Latin American states, the United States needs to again define its strategic security interests in the area and selectively work toward US-Latin American arrangements that will maintain such interests. Instead, there appears to be a regrettable lack of consideration and discussion of this important strategic element of US-Latin American policy by US decisionmakers and the architects of opinion.

In the broadest and most general sense, the United States is likely interested in the evolution of Latin American states with representative, ideologically compatible, modernizing governments with which the United States can amicably live in hemispheric and world community. Such a strategic interest comfortably allows for a wide diversity of political and economic systems while excluding any of a repressive character, particularly any committed to the historic inevitability of world hegemony by a state or ideology. To allow nations the pursuit of that generalized interest, the United States has, since the Monroe Doctrine, steadfastly opposed the establishment in the Western hemisphere of any power hostile to the United States. The 1947 Rio Defense Treaty, the Latin American Military Assistance Program, and the 1962 Cuban missile crisis all stem from that strategic concern. Indeed, the Rio Treaty, coming as it did in the aftermath of World War II, was founded on the concept of hemispheric defense.

Given the realities of world power at the time, the Rio Treaty was undoubtedly excessive to the need. Since 1961, however, the rationale for US security interest in Latin America evidently has been founded on the view that Communist-sponsored insurgency is the primary threat in the area, and US security interest has shifted to the control of insurgency problems. Implicit in that decision of 15 years ago was the correct assessment that the external military threat to Latin America was remote and that Latin American military forces for direct use against a distant enemy would be irrelevant to the outcome. With the steady growth in USSR military capabilities since 1961, however, and the exercise and movement of Soviet forces into areas that can be

directly related to US-Latin American security, the assessment no longer holds. It would be a dreadful and ironic turn, however, if support for the treaty collapsed for *nonsecurity* reasons at a time that honest needs for the treaty came into being.

Whatever the future holds, the US security policy apparently continues to be based on the belief that a hostile power in Latin America could pose grave threats to fundamental strategic security interests of the United States. None the less, although certain states and regions are growing in importance, in strategic military terms, not all of Latin America is of equal importance to the United States.

US strategic *military* interests in Latin America are diverse, but can be broadly categorized in positive and negative terms.

In a positive sense, Latin America is significant because of the support it can provide to fulfilling US security interests worldwide, particularly in the NATO European context and, to a lesser degree, in Asia. From Latin America the United States would require access to bases and facilities, strategic materials, military resources, and sea and air transit rights.

In a negative sense, the *lack* of a serious military threat to the southern flank of the United States allows for the commitment of US military resources in support of interests elsewhere, to NATO Europe, for example. Indeed, the impact could be devastating upon the general East-West political and military strategic balance if the United States was forced to program significant military resources against a hostile power's military capability entrenched in, let us say, Mexico or the states and territories of the Caribbean basin. The Russian geopolitician, L. I. Kamynin, perceiving this point exactly, has suggested that, "In military-strategic terms, it (the Caribbean) is a sort of hinterland on whose stability freedom of US action in other parts of the globe depends."

In the Cuban missile crisis such a military threat to the United States was confronted and dealt with. The residual Cuban military capability is not inconsequential, however, and it is logical to assume that US forces are tasked against Cuba in the event that Cuba joins with the USSR in hostilities against the United States.

Given such a role by Cuba, and under the present US strategic military concepts and priorities, it is likely that only the minimal US air and naval forces needed to perform a few basic tasks would be assigned. Such forces would have the mission of conducting surveillance and preventing the introduction of offensive systems which could be used

against the mainland of the United States and its Latin American allies, or the allied European and Latin American air and sea lines of communication. Should Cuba be provided with distinctly offensive military systems in peacetime, any planning commitment of US forces for use against Cuba in wartime would necessarily soar. Indeed, the United States would likely witness some resurgence of the defensive mentality that resulted from US fears of the Spanish Fleet in the early days of the Spanish-American War with a concurrent shift in peacetime military dispositions. And should Cuba become the operating base of the Soviet forces, offensive or defensive, not only would the numbers of US forces earmarked against Cuba be increased, but the entire strategic relationship with the Soviet Union would require reevaluation.

Whatever the size of US force commitments such possibilities might evoke with respect to Cuba, the theoretical requirements would increase many fold should another sizeable Caribbean basin state become a potential base for hostile forces. Such an eventuality would require, of course, a Communist party takeover in a state of the area, or emergence of a xenophobically anti-US government.

The Caribbean basin, heretofore seen primarily as a military area vital to the United States because of the Panama Canal and the density of the shipping afloat on its immediate and adjoining waters, continues to retain its importance for those reasons. With the advent of long-range conventional and nuclear systems, however, its waters and lands have also become a potential base for hostile forces directed against the United States and a true southern flank of the United States.[1] The intensity of the threats that might emanate from the Caribbean basin relates directly to the war's duration and whether a NATO-Warsaw Pact war is nuclear, entirely conventional, or some form of mixed nuclear-conventional war.

Having suggested the broad positive and negative values of Latin America, the focus can be sharpened by examination of certain specifics.

THE CARIBBEAN

The importance of denying the Caribbean basin to a potential enemy has been made. The positive contribution of the area to US security now merits consideration.

The lands of the Caribbean basin have known the diverse colonial tutelage and are the disparate legacy of Spain, England, France and

Holland. Even Denmark, Sweden and the Knights of St. John, Malta have had holdings in the area. Melded with these national strains was the institutional and cultural influence of slavery. Additionally, in some states the Indian and East Indian strains are important. Today, languages and cultures reflect this multiplicity of origins.

As if to accentuate such apartness, the distances are great: 1200 miles from the Yucatan Channel to Port of Spain (Dublin to Izmir). Two things are common, the sea and airspace.

Throughout the area, a multipurposed network of naval and air facilities provide the United States with centers for surveillance, training, and transit to and beyond the Caribbean basin and its sea and airspace. The great arc of islands reaching from the Bahamas to Trinidad and Tobago, and standing between the Atlantic and Caribbean, create the strategic straits through whose passages most of the ocean traffic of 13 major trade routes must pass, enroute to the Panama Canal.

Despite a steady increase in Caribbean traffic there has been a disposition in recent years to denigrate the importance of this aspect of the Caribbean, usually because it fits tidily with a diminished emphasis on the significance of the Panama Canal or because some believe that a major war, should it come, will become nuclear quickly and be apocalyptic in outcome.

Such conclusions must now be tempered by the demonstrated disposition of the United States and the USSR to increase the number and kinds of inhibitors to any such automatic escalatory courses of action (e.g. the hot-line) and a conscious search for conventional military techniques short of all-out nuclear war. In short, adoption by NATO of the flexible response strategy and the evolution by the Warsaw Pact toward what appears to be a pragmatic acceptance of the possibility of conventional warwaging suggests the possibility of conflict scenarios at conventional levels or mixed conventional-tactical nuclear levels for extended and significant periods of time, assuming the West has the means successfully to resist the Warsaw Pact. Indeed, given the awesome capability of each adversary to inflict unacceptable levels of nuclear damage upon the other, one might expect a disposition by rational leaders to try almost anything, or accept almost anything except total defeat, before either resorts to the near suicidal use of strategic nuclear weapons. If this be so, long before any strategic nuclear exchange occurs, the heavy ocean traffic of the Caribbean could become militarily and economically important. Afterwards, under any

circumstances, it might be essential to those processes necessary to restore and reconstitute the strength of the United States and its allies. To safeguard such shipping, the base structure of the Caribbean basin is essential and, for the functional purposes suggested, such essentiality extends to bases in Bermuda, the Azores and the northeastern tip of Brazil. Robert Crassweller describes yet another purpose for the Caribbean base system: "maintenance and operation of the US undersea surveillance system (SOSUS)" which, he alleges, will allow US antisubmarine forces "to maintain a deterrent contact with Russian SSBNs (during) . . . times of tension or conflict."[2]

In addition to such larger strategic military uses, there is the important function of military training which is conducted at various Caribbean bases in the Canal Zone, Puerto Rico and Cuba. Notable are the Army's Fort Gulick School for the Americas, and the Jungle Warfare Training Center; the Air Force Inter-American Air Forces Academy; the Navy Roosevelt Roads missile range, and the critical "shake-down" training facility at Guantanamo Bay.

The high desirability of being able to air stage into the Caribbean basin, and to areas south of the basin, and to Africa lends additional importance to airfields in Puerto Rico, the Howard and Albrook Air Bases in the Canal Zone, and to the availability of fields in Guyana - (Atkinson), and facilities in Brazil.

A variety of other activities including LORAN stations, Air Force and NASA facilities, and communication stations dot the regions of the Bahamas and the eastern Caribbean islands. Facilities are to be found in Antigua, Barbados, San Salvador, Grand Turk, Charlotte Amalie, Grand Bahama, Eleuthera, Mayaguana, Trinidad and Tobago.[3]

The US Navy Atlantic Underseas Test and Evaluation Center (AUTEC), invaluable to antisubmarine warfare developments, takes advantage of the incomparable natural endowments of Andros in the Bahamas. Such is the impressive catalogue of US military interests in the Caribbean basin.

Inasmuch as US economic interests relate, in some degree, to US security and the US world power role, notice must be taken of the significant US economic position in the Caribbean basin.

The Caribbean area also provides to the United States important quantities of strategic materials.

In seeking to define the strategic relevance of the area to the United States, one is impressed with the validity of Robert D. Crassweller's assessment.

> A serious thrust at the American vital interest of national security, through the Caribbean, would be intolerable both of itself and as a fundamental attack upon a system of balanced power throughout the world. In the same manner, a continuing erosion of the balance through attrition of America's numerous secondary interests in the Caribbean would properly be regarded as so serious in its cumulative and ultimate implications that one may almost conclude that the bundle of secondary interests, in combination, takes on much of the imperative quality of vital interests . . . The continuation of American national interest in the Caribbean may be regarded as of such significance that its affirmation or denial becomes almost a corollary of the largest question of all, whether or not the United States wishes to, or should, continue to conduct itself as a world power, with global purpose and responsibility.[4]

PASSAGE BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC

The importance to the United States of secure passage between the world's two great oceans stems from the physical fact of America's geographic position between those two great bodies which the United States must reach and be reached in order to maintain its security, economic and other worldwide interests. Two sea routes traverse the waters of Latin America and link the oceans; one through the Panama Canal and the other around the southern tip of South America.

Independent of the trend in US peacetime use of the Panama Canal, it has steadily increased in military importance to the United States. During World War II approximately 5,300 warships, and 8,500 troop cargo ships with military supplies, used the canal. During the Korean War (FY 1953), 22 percent of the Army tonnage for Korea was shipped from East or Gulf ports through the Canal.[5] Use of the canal to support the military operations in Southeast Asia again underscored the great utility of the canal.

The congressionally-sponsored Interoceanic Canal Commission Study Group reported to the President that closure or denial of the Panama Canal would approximately *double* the requirements for ships to support, from Atlantic and Gulf ports, a given level of combat operations in the Pacific. Although the study does not specifically examine any converse proposition, that is, movement from Pacific to Atlantic, some general comparability seems likely. Moreover, the report affirms the oft made point that, in general, ocean shipping is the most sensitive transport capability and will account for 90 percent of total war materiel deliveries. The bulk character of POL, ammunition and, increasingly, motorized ground and airmobile equipment suit them particularly for ocean shipping.

In addition to the canal's across-the-board value in military operations, it has a specific value in the economic employment of naval power. Canal transit cuts about 8,000 miles from the coast to coast voyage around Cape Horn with a time saving of 15 days for fast ships (20 knots), and up to 30 days for those slower. If the canal were closed, US military planning would likely require an increase in the level of active naval forces, or acceptance of a marked increase in reaction time to crisis.

It seems clear that a number of important military benefits can accrue to the United States through use of the canal under military conditions short of strategic nuclear war. The first is related to the speed with which forces can be prepositioned in emergencies. During the 1962 Cuban crisis, some 25 US warships made rapid deployments using the canal. Although the significance of that movement to the crisis outcome should not be overestimated, use of the canal clearly contributed to the quick US assertion of local tactical superiority and the efficacy of the blockade.

The second advantage is the accrued saving of overall resources made possible by bringing greater combat power into play sooner by using the same logistic train of vessels via the canal, versus some other longer route.

A third advantage is the reduction per voyage in exposure time to submarine and raider attack that comes about because of shorter passage. One should note, however, that the canal becomes the necessary merger point for shipping and thus creates both advantages and disadvantages for both the defenders and attackers.

Lastly, the canal allows most warships and cargo ships to avoid exposure to the considerable natural hazards of the Cape Horn and Straits of Magellan passages. Only a landlubber could be unmindful or contemptuous of this advantage.

The value of the canal in the event of a strategic nuclear exchange is less susceptible to study or historic justification. Once a strategic nuclear exchange has begun it is a near certainty that the canal, if targeted, could be hit, closed, and possibly demolished. Thus, its value may only be related to the preinitiation period, and becomes a function of the length of political and strategic warning that might precede the attack. If the warning time allowed, the canal's role in prepositioning, redeploying or reinforcing land, air and naval forces could be significant. It might, indeed, even be critical to the rapid assumption by the United States and NATO Europe of a military posture which would

be an effective deterrent to the seemingly inevitable course of events then entrained; to fulfill that role once is to have repaid the canal's cost beyond the limits of estimation.

Although the high military utility of a shortened passage between the Atlantic and Pacific is undiminished, the present canal is, regrettably, vulnerable to sabotage and blocking and is, in some respects, obsolescent. The restrictions on its use are created by the locks which are 110 feet wide and 41 feet deep, by 1,000 feet long. No one of the Navy's aircraft carriers now in commission, or under construction, will fit those dimensions. In addition, there are over a thousand merchant ships afloat, under construction, or on order, which cannot transit, and nearly two thousand more ships that cannot pass fully loaded due to draft limitations in seasonal low water.

The Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Canal Study Commission made a report to the President on December 1, 1970 on the most desirable and feasible site for a sea level canal. Its findings were necessarily couched in ways to accommodate to the still ongoing treaty negotiations with Panama. In essence, however, it recommended initiation of a sea-level canal on the Panamanian Chorrera-Lagarto route, about 10 miles west of the present canal, no later than 15 years in advance of the probable date when traffic through the lock canal will reach its transit capacity. That date is now foreseen as near the end of this century. The Commission found that the construction of a sea level canal by conventional means is feasible.

"The United States must have a secure Isthmian Canal, and its defense can best be accomplished in conjunction with defense of the surrounding area, at great distances from the canal itself." The Commission Study declared that a sea level canal would be much less vulnerable to disruption and hence easier to defend. It has even been argued that its reconstruction after a nuclear attack would be possible, and particularly so if the sea level canal was generously wide and deep.

The vulnerability of the Panama Canal and its inability to accommodate US aircraft carriers, and a goodly number of merchant ships, underscores the importance of a secure, alternate maritime passage between the oceans: the southern route.

Ships which round Cape Horn face bad weather and the dangers of collision with icebergs. In the higher latitudes, the hazard from icebergs increases and the area south of Cape Horn is a particularly dangerous region. Icebergs of 20 or more miles in length have been reported there. The weather pattern is predominantly foul and from east to west. In

consequence, weather works less hardship on the Pacific to Atlantic passage.

The Strait of Magellan's relative calm and safety, when compared to the surrounding ocean area, is the primary consideration in a decision to transit via the strait, not the saving of some 230 miles over the passage around the Horn. At its narrowest point in the vicinity of Carlos Island, the width is about 2,500 yards. During most of the summer months, navigation presents no problem greater than those encountered in restricted passages elsewhere in the world, even for large ships such as aircraft carriers. Nonetheless, to the best of the author's knowledge, there are no known instances of US carriers electing to transit the strait. The Government of Chile imposes regulations for navigation and requires pilot service for all merchant or warships transiting the straits.

THE ATLANTIC NARROWS

The 1,400 mile wide Atlantic Narrows between Cape San Roque Brazil, and the west coast of Africa has been of importance to the United States and the western alliance since World War II, and its strategic significance seems destined to increase.

In Volume One of his *History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II, The Battle of the Atlantic,* Rear Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, USNR, chronicles the magnificent and heroic combined efforts of the US and Brazilian Navies to control the Narrows, and the waters of the Brazilian coast. Cooperation between the navies had begun in 1914; it bore fruition in the troubled times after Brazil's entry into the war on August 22, 1942, an event characterized by Rear Admiral Morison as "of great importance in naval history." Patrols were established in the big triangle of ocean between Trinidad, Cape San Roque and Cape Verde Islands. Coastal convoys were formed. The ports of Recife and Bahia were developed and utilized. Natal became the principal airbase due to its strategic location and favorable winds; work on airfields at Belem, Fortaleza, Recife, Rio de Janiero and Bahia progressed. British-owned Ascension Island, 1,200 miles east of Recife, was developed into an air facility by the US Army Engineers for staging to Africa and eventual antisubmarine patrol use.[6]

Admiral Morison records that Admiral Doenitz's U-boats loitered about the St. Paul Rocks, Fernando Noronha, in the doldrums between Cape San Roque and Cape Verde, and off the Cape of Good Hope; 10

U-boats rendezvousing with a "milch cow" off the northwest coast of Brazil. The U-boats took their toll: April-May 1942, 6 ships within 1,200 miles of Brazil; August, 5 ships off the Brazilian coast; November-December, 56 ships. Through the Atlantic Narrows also moved the blockade runners, about half of whose important cargoes, perhaps 16 of some 35-37, arrived safely in France and Germany from Japan.

The attritive antisubmarine war continued with successes and failures. Its intensity is supported by the fact that between May 1943 and May 1945, 22 U-boats were sunk directly, or with assistance, by US forces in the Atlantic Narrows - South Atlantic area. Such is the historic record of warfare along this important sea lane against the comparatively primitive submarines of Nazi Germany.

More recently, the level of interest in the military importance of this ocean was raised by the closure of the Suez Canal, and the advent of the petroleum super tanker whose great size could not be accommodated by a reopened Suez.

The most compelling reason, of course, is the heavy dependence of NATO Europe and the United States upon oil transported from the Persian Gulf around the Cape of Good Hope and through the Narrows. For the United States, that dependence has risen from an 8 percent level in 1973 to 21 percent in 1976 with an additional 8 percent imported from Iran. The significance of both the dependence and the transit route is not lost on the Soviet Union. At least one extended submarine operation off the Cape Verde Islands has been supported from submarine tenders, Soviet warships have visited regularly at Conakry and a token naval force is stationed there. As if to underscore Communist interest, in May of 1972 Fidel Castro paid a state visit to Guinea. The chronicle of Communist interest and involvement has been capped by Soviet and Cuban activity in Angola. Moreover, Soviet naval officers reportedly serve as harbor masters in Aden; Soviet submarines cruise off Capetown and Ceylon; Soviet fleet port facilities purportedly exist at Aden, Mogadishu in Somalia, the Island of Socotra and the Seychelles Islands; Soviet fishing ships find support in Tanzania, Mauritius and Ceylon.

Credible scenarios for the use of Soviet military power against the long sea passage along the Narrows-South Atlantic route can be developed ranging from harassment and intimidation to various levels of war. In all such circumstances, the importance of Brazil's role has been confirmed both by the history of World War II and contemporary

technology. The US P-3C Orion, for example, operating from the Brazilian World War II locations, can travel out as much as 1,550 nautical miles (nm) at 18,000-24,000 feet, and then carry out an on-station search for 3 hours at 1,500 feet; a 1,000 nm mission could allow 7 hours of search time at 204 knots.[7] The importance of Brazilian bases for surface escorts and sea control ships is similarly apparent.

RESOURCES

No examination of the US security interest in Latin America can be complete without some mention of that area's importance as a source of critical minerals and other materials. There are, in addition, other resources which weigh-in as of strategic interest.

The US strategic materials stockpile has diminished the immediate importance of most such assets to wartime production, but the unpredictable nature and the voracious appetite of Mars require that some weight, however uncertain, be given to these assets of Latin America.

Moreover, Western Europe and Japan derive significant portions of their raw material needs from Latin America. Japan, and those of our NATO Allies who do not maintain stockpiles, could face critical shortages with consequent deleterious impact upon their war production capability if Latin American sources were denied to them.

A partial listing of US imports from Latin America would include substantial percentages of metallurigical bauxite from Jamaica and Surinam, refractory bauxite from Guyana and Surinam, and petroleum from Venezuela. Cadmium comes from Mexico; columbium, manganese, mica, quartz crystal, and castor oil from Brazil; copper from Chile; lead from Mexico and Peru; tin from Bolivia; and zinc from various Latin American countries. In addition, limited quantities of precious metals, many of importance to the defense electronic industry, are also imported from the region, including mercury, silver, platinum, palladium, and even some industrial diamonds.

To such an inventory of strategic resources now must be added the growing industrial capability in some of the countries, the most significant example of which is Brazil. In all, there is such an aggregate of industry and skilled personnel as must suggest that there could be conflict situations in which the United States and its allies would be well served by the growing industrial base in certain Latin American

nations, a consideration which could have had no military relevance 10 years ago.

Finally, the capability of many Latin American military units to undertake significant military tasks outside the boundaries of their country needs a more studied assessment. The general evidence suggests, however, that the standards of military professionalism in many countries have been very high for some years. The annual multinavy UNITAS exercise repetitively confirms this as does the experience of other US military services. Technical schools and senior staff colleges in Latin America and the United States have created a deep cadre of officers with well-developed military skills and the capacity to maintain and employ modern arms. There are already superior modern aircraft, missiles, and ships available in the Latin American military inventory and it seems likely that this trend, however it may deplete resources painfully needed for economic modernization, will continue.

The consequence of this modernization of capability should be the emergence of additional elite units with the ability to fight alongside their Western equivalents. Indeed, as has been suggested, some already exist. It may be that a larger world role could be played by nations with such forces if the NATO Alliance in concert or, as is more possible, its members bilaterally could find the political, military and economic formulae that would make their participation mutually acceptable and homogenous with European defense needs. Any prospect for Latin American inclusion in the NATO corporate structure is most remote given the attitudinal set of NATO states against what would be viewed as authoritarian regimes, and the seeming remoteness of the region. Nor should one presume that there is an irresistable lure posed for Latin American states, often concerned with regional security problems, for such a military role. Even so, the NATO Alliance would do well to develop some policy, however informally, toward the area and speed recognition of the increased strategic significance to the Alliance of the Atlantic Narrows-South Atlantic area. Such policy should indirectly encourage, to the maximum extent possible, allied bilateral and multinational/military cooperation with Latin America outside the forms of the Alliance. A start might be provided by extending participation in the UNITAS exercise to some grouping of Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Holland and perhaps West Germany, all of whom, but Canada, have made or hope to make major naval sales to Argentina and Brazil, and so can be expected to reinforce their strategic

interests in South Atlantic naval operations with a commercial interest in showing their wares. Exchanges of military observers at exercises could be broadened as well as selective participation by Latins in European war gaming and study.

As for the Latin American leaders who might ultimately be engaged by this strategic security viewpoint, one would hope that the sterility of national military viewpoints, which sometimes fasten on strictly regional security interests, could be freshened by the prospect of meaningful contribution to those world security arrangements which are, after all, the bedrock upon which statesmen must build the hopes of the free men of the world. Indeed, the inevitable tensions that seem destined to accompany addressal of the economic points at issue between the Third and developed worlds might, in some cases, be mitigated by a Western policy designed to draw the more strategically significant of the Latin American states into the broader area of Western security affairs. Some disposition toward a less narrow security view has already been articulated by ranking Brazilian officers who have asserted that Brazil has a responsibility to become a naval power in the South Atlantic.[8]

In recent months persons concerned with the security of the West have raised the question of whether NATO strategy and forces should be shaped to a short, violent war that materializes with little warning or, as is now apparently the case, a war of longer, perhaps unlimited duration that begins after a period of political and/or strategic warning. This important issue has profound implications for the kind, size, disposition and weaponry of NATO forces and the logistics they may ultimately require. Moreover, this implication extends, to some degree, to the strategic importance to the West of Latin America.

The short war thesis has an underlying logic that, at first glance, seems overwhelming in its pristine simplicity. If the Alliance is unprepared to repel a massive, conventional surprise attack and Western Europe is overrun in a comparatively short time it matters little whether there are other Allied forces marshalling to continue the war for a longer period. Upon examination, however, the appealing simplicity of the short war thesis gives way.

Although a heavy, completely surprise attack is possible, political and/or strategic warning is much more likely. What is needed is not a complete restructuring of strategy against an unlikely contingency but political and military commanders, sensitive to the significance of intelligence indicators, who will not fail to note and act in a timely

manner upon the likely intelligence. Further, planning for a short war plainly announces to the Warsaw Pact that Western Europe can be had at a price, namely one day of Warsaw Pact effort beyond that which NATO is prepared to exert. Moreover, that fact and Allied failure to plan for a long war would seriously erode deterrence. Plainly the Warsaw Pact cannot be expected to believe that the United States and NATO have the political will to face the uncertain consequences of using nuclear weapons if the United States lacks the political means to support the force structure required for an appreciably less dangerous course; the conventional long war. In addition, the uncertain nature of war requires prudent consideration and planning for circumstances less tidy than a short war. Should Allied forces fail to hold, the short war could pose the dilemma of using nuclear weapons or accepting catastrophic defeat. The declaratory objective of Soviet military doctrine is to wage war until victory, without consideration of duration. Indeed, US espousal of the short war strategy would be perceived by our Allies as a significant diminution in our commitment to Western Europe with incalculable political and even economic consequences. It would most surely rekindle West European interest in the development of their own nuclear weapons.

The foundation of the approved NATO strategy apparently now declares that the United States and the European Allies will, without surcease, wage war by any means including nuclear to protect the territorial integrity of NATO.

None the less, if political and military leaders are faced with diminishing resources to use for defense, they may find the short war thesis an alternative to a war of indefinite duration.

Such a wrenching decision would, of course, mean some changes in the importance of present US strategic interests in Latin America. Strategic planners would likely see the Canal and secure East-West passage as diminished in military significance. Even less important would be the mineral and manufacturing resources of Latin America since national stockpiles would fill the immediate war needs and the comparatively long lead time required to start up or redirect manufacturing efforts would make them irrelevant. On the other hand, greater value would be accorded to Latin American military units whose readiness and/or mobility would facilitate their early commitment to the war. In like manner, the security of the US southern flank would be of increased importance since an enemy's all out effort mounted from that area, however brief its duration, would

deplete US military resources tagged for immediate or early use elsewhere in the conflict.

The Soviet Union, leader of the Warsaw Pact, continues to pursue its prime objectives in Latin America:

- to expel or diminish US and Western influence in the area;
- to prevent the movement toward Latin American identification and integration with the Western world.

Success in its objective in any Latin American state is intended, to some varying degree, to diminish the security of the United States and the West and to enhance the world power position of the Soviet Union. The Latin American movement toward third world positions, however well it may serve Latin American interests, at least temporarily coincides with Soviet objective two and has the effect of diminishing the overall strength of the West.

Despite the ambitious nature of its objective, Latin America as a whole likely ranks well down in priority among the Soviets' worldwide interests. On a selective basis, however, certain nations clearly do stand well above the rest of Latin America in importance to Moscow, and even high in the international order of priorities. Cuba is such an example. Soviet targets are at least partially chosen on the basis of their importance to the United States, and the overall defense of the West and for the exploitable possibilities the Soviets may perceive for furthering their objective as the opportunities may arise. Thus, Panama, Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela, for example, may be priority targets but, for a number of reasons, opportunities for exploitation may arise sooner or be more promising in, let us say, Bolivia, or Peru. In any situation, flexible use will be made of both the tactics of revolutionary action and the united front.

Soviet military activity is responsive to what the Soviet leadership perceives to be Russian interests; the interests are a blend, in varying proportion, of both historic and ideological ingredients. Historic interests, sometimes centuries old, are in the main the consequence of Russia's geographic position and Russian political, economic and psychological interaction with other states, particularly those to which it is proximate. To this has been added, in modern times, the compulsions that accompany devotion to the Marxist-Leninist ideology. From that latter spring at least two powerful activist drives. The first is to ensure, by hard work, the "historic inevitability" of the world revolution; the second is to thwart the capitalist-imperialist forces which, in the paranoid needs of its ideology, threaten by their existence

the USSR and its role as the sacred custodian of the ideological grail. Years of practice in the role of the cup-bearer, and the vicissitudes of history, have taught the Soviet Union the importance of tactical flexibility, and even temperance, in the pursuit of its goals.

In Latin America, however, although Soviet policy objectives are grand in scope, the priority and level of energy devoted to their pursuit are not, as yet, very high, although surely higher than a decade ago. The priority Soviet interests are to be found elsewhere. Nonetheless, Soviet military planners are responsible for such military support as can be given Soviet objectives in Latin America. In the conduct of their planning, they undoubtedly foresee some contingencies where military advantage can be taken of the Cuban position in the area. And Soviet military interest in certain locales, such as the Canal and Atlantic Narrows, is surely high. Soviet planners, looking to the future, even may expect that there will be times when the Soviet Union might want to assist the struggle by Latin American Communist parties, or Marxist groups acceptable to the USSR, by military means either directly or by maneuver.

Given such possible tasks in Latin America, but with higher priorities elsewhere, the Soviet military planners are confronted with a paucity of military resources. The military strength of the United States of NATO and of the People's Republic of China, in the areas of most immediate concern to the USSR, does not allow for sizeable Soviet forces to be regularly deployed to Latin American areas in time of peace, let alone in time of major crisis or war. Small-sized peacetime deployments of potent forces to Latin America will be made, other priorities permitting, and area orientation and training cruises will surely continue, particularly for submarines. Mention has been made of the extended submarine deployment off the Cape Verde Islands, and considerable international publicity has attested to the Soviet surface ship and submarine deployments to Cuba and the Caribbean area. Soviet long-range bombers periodically fly to Cuba and Aeroflot maintains a weekly schedule. What may be of greater significance than the continuing visits are the Soviet support facilities.

It is clearer, however, that the Soviet Union would like to have a substantial nuclear submarine, other naval and air operating facilities in Cuba, now, and elsewhere in Latin America if opportunities present themselves. The United States should expect a test of the degree to which that objective can be fulfilled some time now that the new US administration has taken over.

Meantime the state-to-state business of ingratiating themselves with Latin American states has taken the form, in Peru and earlier in Chile, of assistance in port development and offers of military assistance on generous terms. Peru has succumbed to those blandishments and other offers are likely to follow and then become more widespread.

If Soviet military interest in Latin America now is generally low, mostly because of the problems posed by potential opposition forces elsewhere, it is useful to remember that the present balance is the result of a highly complex equation whose elements could shift in the future: e.g., a unilateral US reduction of US forces in Europe, a successful mutual and balanced force reduction, a cut-back in NATO general purpose forces, or a thaw in Sino-Soviet relations. Should the equation change, more Soviet forces would become available to support Soviet objectives in Latin America in peace as well as war.

The wartime use for Soviet military forces in Latin American areas has been suggested elsewhere; they continue to be those purposes best fulfilled by aircraft, the merchant or naval raider and the submarine. Beyond the surge employment of such Soviet and Cuban forces, any future submarine war will doubtless involve complex technological and tactical ploys and counter ploys, with computer accounting of submarine and ship losses both aiding and complicating the analytic work of opposing staffs. Using such analysis, a sophisticated counterpart to what was done by Admiral Doenitz in World War II, the Soviet military will carefully consider the rewards that might be found in a submarine campaign in the Caribbean and the Narrows-South Atlantic areas because of the lucrative nature of the targets to be found there, and what may continue to be a paucity of allied and Latin American antisubmarine resources.

To this near traditional wartime Soviet use of a large conventional and nuclear attack submarine fleet now must be added the possibilities that the Soviet Union might perceive for its nuclear armed missile submarines as weapons of terror and political intimidation against would-be Latin American allies of the United States. In a NATO-Soviet war, wherein both sides sought significant advantage in conventional combat, the Soviet Union might seek to impose neutrality upon an important ally, let us hypothetically suggest Brazil, by threatening nuclear devastation. In the absence of any US peacetime extension of the nuclear umbrella to such an ally, a US wartime pledge, exacted under the suggested condition, might lack credibility to both the Soviet Union and Brazil. The consequences would be the loss of an ally, and

likely others as well, no one of whom would be vital to a successful defense against the Warsaw Pact, but whose cumulative loss could mean a fundamental shift in the conventional power relation and some shift in the nuclear threshold.

It is well to remember that in security terms, the gravest threat to US survival would occur in the event of a NATO-Warsaw Pact war. Such a titanic struggle would inevitably be worldwide in scope, essentially because the chief states on both sides confront each other on a worldwide basis. Indeed, we would be at war in response to the Soviet use of military means to further their world power aspirations.

However, the West and Japan do not enjoy the military advantages of interior lines of communication, common to the Warsaw Pact, but must maintain their military viability via the seas and their airspace. In such circumstances, Latin American states that can aid in securing the essential lines of communication, or assist in other ways, become of value. Such value may range in importance from helpful to even vital. Study and planning can aid in identifying such valuable states, but only the bloody caprice of war can reveal the full truth.

Thus in a global war, whose outcome could definitely alter the balance of world power, it is important to deny or neutralize potential allies of the enemy, wherever they are found, and bind close those that can be of value. Latin America is no exception to that elementary but towering truth.

Although the nature of US-Latin American relations is in flux, the United States continues to have security interests in the area that must be factored into policy decisions. The United States must avoid the danger of overlooking those security interests in the obsessive concern with the Third World issues that now dominate Latin American international plans and behavior. There are established means, already in hand, by which the United States can help insure the growth or continuation of coincident security views with those of strategically significant Latin American states.

The inter-American security system needs to be better utilized as a means of educating the Latin American military as to their stake in an East-West confrontation. The military in the stronger of the Latin American states will increasingly seek legitimate arguments, a rationale, for the size and modernity of their military forces. Although Latin American military participation in an East-West confrontation now would be limited to some naval units, there is a present need and a role to be played by select, elite Army and Air Force units in the central

East-West areas of confrontation. For the military, it might be that such a role would help lift their eyes beyond the internal political happenings in their nations, diminish the insecurity of neighbor states and forestall an interest in the acquisition of nuclear arms. It would be a tragedy if the system fell apart just as the need for it in East-West terms becomes urgent, and the military means for a useful role become available in select states.

ENDNOTES

1. The military significance of the Caribbean basin is founded in geographic factors: proximity to the United States and vital lines of communication; vastness; the remoteness and impenetrability of certain of its land areas; its countless bays and inlets.

2. Robert D. Crassweller, *The Caribbean Community–Changing Societies and U.S. Policy*, New York: Praeger, 1972.

3. Crassweller, *The Caribbean Community*, p. 42.

4. Crassweller, *The Caribbean Community*, pp. 58-59.

5. US Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Canal Study Commission, *Atlantic-Pacific Interoceanic Canal Study Commission Report*, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, December 1, 1970, p. II-4.

6. Rear Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of U.S. Naval Operations in World War II*, Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1947, Vol. 1, p. 396.

7. J. Philip Geddes, "ASW From the Air–The PC-3 Orion In Operation," *International Defense Review*, February 14, 1972, p. 29.

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This paper considers the movement of Latin American nations away from the traditional US-Latin American political alignment and toward identification with third world positions, and the implications of this trend for US security interests. The strategic importance of each Latin American area is conditioned by the strategic NATO decision whether to prepare for a war in Europe of long or short duration, since Western Europe will remain vital to US security for the foreseeable future.

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